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## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Congressional Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20505

Telephone [redacted] 17 July 86

**TO:** Mr. Richard Giza  
 Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
 House of Representatives  
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Dick:

Per our conversation, enclosed is our paper on "Human Rights Situation in Guatemala" in response to the article which appeared in "The New Republic".

Additionally, please refer to the assessment, Guatemala: Progress on Human Rights, copy #158 which was sent to HPSCI in January.



House Affairs  
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16 July 1986

## Human Rights Situation in Guatemala

Guatemala has had a notoriously poor human rights record in the last two decades under a succession of military governments that condoned violence to maintain order and suppress dissent. As recently as last summer, the military under Chief of State Mejia sometimes overreacted to insurgent activity. Following the killings of two military commissioners and several Civil Defense Force members in Patzun, Chimaltenango Department, for example, the local military commander--subsequently transferred--carried out a series of assassinations and abductions, according to US Embassy reporting. The article, "Bureaucracy of Death," by Nairn and Simon points to some of the more odious examples of this repression--such as the assassinations of Alberto Fuentes Mohr and Manuel Colon Argueta in 1979--to illustrate the apparent license with which the death squads operated. That said, the transition to civilian government--beginning in 1983--has been accompanied by significant reforms with a resultant decrease in the number of political murders and kidnappings, according to the US Embassy. The Nairn and Simon article minimizes this, mixing accounts of past abuses with the current administration, giving short shrift to Cerezo's efforts to reform the police, assert civilian control over the security forces, and address the concerns of domestic and foreign human rights groups, which have improved Guatemala's international image.

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For its part, the military sees improvements in human rights as essential to securing badly needed economic and military assistance. The armed forces probably will tolerate limited human rights reforms as long as Cerezo can maintain public order and as long as the Army retains the upper hand against the insurgents, which seems likely during Cerezo's administration. The military clearly draws a line regarding prosecution of its members for past abuses, however, and Cerezo is not likely to test their tolerance on this issue.

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Cerezo--building on steps taken by Chief of State Rios Montt three years ago--has moved cautiously to exert civilian control over the police and security forces. Although we believe he will continue to make slow progress, the need to work closely with the military makes it unlikely that he will initiate sweeping reforms.

--In 1983, the military began indoctrinating troops and field commanders on the need to respect human rights during military operations.

--Cerezo has focused his reforms primarily on the civilian security forces under control of the Interior Minister. He abolished the Department of Technical Investigations (DIT) and made some 80 leadership changes, including naming some civilians to key posts.

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These reforms, according to the US Embassy, caused no serious backlash among military or security forces officials and have improved the morale of police cadre. Cerezo has tried to balance these reforms by obtaining increased equipment and training for police units.

--The Minister of Defense plans to curb abuses by Civil Defense (CDF) patrolmen and soldiers by giving only zone commanders authority to order the arrest of citizens suspected of involvement with insurgents, [REDACTED]

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--The conviction in April of a soldier for the murder of a civilian during a street brawl, and a separate conviction in May of four CDF members for murdering a fellow villager, signal, in our view, an increased willingness on the part of the Army to discipline at least junior officers who commit private acts of violence.

--Few changes have been made, however, in the the military's intelligence apparatus, the G-2, which is notorious for having coordinated kidnappings and death squad activity under previous regimes. While the G-2 has yet to undergo internal reforms, a new commander, Col. Edgar Augusto Godoy, was named to head that organization. According to the [REDACTED] he was appointed because he is a political moderate who supports the civilian government and is untainted by corruption or human rights violations. Godoy reportedly is seeking to professionalize and reform the G-2 with US assistance.

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--Cerezo hopes to curb abuses by the security forces in the countryside by replacing the military heads of the Interinstitutional Coordinating Committees--rural development agencies--with civilian departmental governors. US Embassy and [REDACTED] indicates that the military so far is cooperating with the President's decision.

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--In an effort to win the continued cooperation from the military, Cerezo publicly has refused to prosecute military officers for past abuses. The President also has pledged to continue the "model villages" program--civic action projects to rebuild destroyed villages and undercut popular support for guerrillas in rural areas--and the Civil Defense Force, two programs the Army believes are key to its counterinsurgency efforts, [REDACTED] (S NF NC OC)

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Controlling rampant--mostly criminally motivated--violence, is a major problem for the new government, according to the US Embassy. While the security forces probably continue to carry out private acts of violence, various reporting suggests that the number of cases has decreased under

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the civilian government. We have no evidence to refute or substantiate military involvement in the killings under the civilian government cited by Nairn and Simon.

--US Embassy statistics reflect a 66 percent decline in political killings between the first three months of 1986 and the same period in 1985. In addition, abductions have dropped to an average of less than nine per month, compared to 16 per month last year and 28 per month in 1982.

--Cerezo publicly admits that random killings--including the murder of his personal pilot--kidnapings and disappearances continue under his administration. Despite the claim by Nairn and Simon that "Cerezo has yet to publicly denounce a single Army killing," the President, lacking proof, has said that members of the security forces may be involved in some of the killings, according to the US Embassy.

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--Almost all of the cases cited as evidence by the authors occurred prior to Cerezo's administration, during the height of the counterinsurgency in 1979-1982. We do not have more than circumstantial evidence to implicate the military for the murders of Alberto Fuentes Mohr and Manuel Colom Argueta in 1979. More recently, a series of inquiries by the US Embassy failed to find evidence to confirm allegations in the press that the military was responsible for the murders of GAM members Hector Gomez and Rosario Godoy de Cuevas in 1985. Although we have no evidence of G-2 involvement in the murder of Beatriz Barrios in December 1985, US Embassy and other reporting suggests paramilitary death squad members may have killed Barrios in an effort to embarrass the incoming civilian government by creating an atmosphere of terror.

--Nairn and Simon base much of their evidence for abuses under the civilian government on a less than reliable source, Col. Edgar Djalma Dominguez, who was stripped of his rank and privileges in late 1985 by the military for corruption relating to immigration.

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Relations between Cerezo and Mutual Support Group (GAM) leaders have become strained in recent months, as the authors point out, but the President has been willing to try to address the GAM's concerns, even in the face of its increasingly confrontational tactics. We believe that an undetermined number of people probably are still being illegally detained, but we have no evidence to confirm or deny the authors' claim that one such center exists at the Mobile Military Police headquarters outside the capital.

--Cerezo has promised to reconsider his decision to postpone creation of a Human Rights Investigation Committee after the courts complete

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investigation of over 1,300 writs of habeas corpus submitted by the GAM in early June.

--Cerezo has invited foreign observers to conduct searches for secret detention centers at military installations, according to the US Embassy. To date, none have been found and investigations have located several people the GAM insisted were missing. [REDACTED]

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